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UNDP Staff Members Cited for Valour and Bravery in Rwanda

Sid Kline / UNDP

From left to right: Yves Le Moal, Jean Françis Faivre, James Gustave Speth and Gregory Alex.

Two staff members of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) who risked their lives in Rwanda in order to save others recently became the first recipients of the Administrator's Citation for Valour. The newly-created award is given to UNDP staff members who take actions above and beyond the call of duty to save lives. The recipients are Mr. Gregory Alex, an American who worked as a UNDP Programme Officer in Kigali; and Mr. Jean François Faivre, a French national posted in Kigali as a Field Security Officer. A third UNDP staff member from its Rwanda office, Mr. Yves Le Moal, also from France, received UNDP's Distinguished Service Award for outstanding leadership and crisis management during the outbreak of civil unrest in that country.

While presenting the awards, Mr. James Gustave Speth, Administrator of UNDP, said that "these selfless acts of courage richly warrant our sincere recognition and appreciation." The Administrator then went on to describe the events which earned the three staff members such recognition.

Mr. Alex chose to remain in Kigali after the general evacuation to assist the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) and the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) in the distribution of food. During this period, the UNDP Administrator said, he was involved in several incidents where he was exposed to serious risk in order to assist others or to secure their safety. In one instance, he defied the orders of armed soldiers in transporting a wounded boy to a hospital for emergency treatment.

Mr. Faivre played a lead role in organizing the evacuation of United Nations staff and their dependents, Mr. Speth said, and in so doing often travelled through areas with intense military activity. In one particular incident Mr. Faivre intervened with armed soldiers to prevent the shooting of a UN national staff member and his daughter and personally escorted them to safety.

Mr. Moal, who received the Distinguished Service Award, provided exemplary leadership in directing the organization of the UN evacuation from Rwanda. "Under extremely violent and harsh conditions he ensured that all international staff and dependents were accounted for, and that safe passage

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was secured," Mr. Speth said.

Apart from these three citations, the UNDP Administrator said that the agency would begin issuing special certificates to give recognition to staff who serve under hazardous conditions in six countries: Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Liberia, Rwanda and Somalia.

UNDP Meets Challenge in Somalia as UNISOM II Winds Down

With the withdrawal of civilian forces under the UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) well underway, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) remains commited to helping that country recover from a war that displaced more than a million Somalis and brought ruin to much of the country's infrastructure and vital agricultural sector.

"Our goal is to support the rehabilitation process as quickly and effectively as possible," says Erling Dessau, UNDP Resident Representative in Somalia. "We are moving now to lay the groundwork for employment creation and widespread community development, both of which are vital for Somalia's recovery."

Mr. Dessau, in his other capacity as UN Resident Coordinator, is responsible for coordinating the UN interagency mission to help Somalia in its rehabilitation and recovery effort: in the rebuilding of its roads, bridges, buildings, health, sanitation, communications systems and administrative structures, much of which were destroyed during the civil war that erupted following the overthrow of the Siad Barre government in 1991.

UNDP, which has an operating budget of US$58 million for Somalia for the 1992-96 period, is concentrating its efforts on several key areas, including rural and community development; the revitalization of the country's fisheries sector; urban reconstruction and planning; demobilizing and retraining soldiers; and rehabilitating the country's civil aviation and ports systems. But a key goal of the UN effort is to assist the Somalis in rebuilding the country's vital agricultural sector, as crop production has fallen sharply from previous years. Many agricultural communities have simply disappeared, and crucial equipment such as tractors, other farm machinery, water pumps, processing plants have been looted or destroyed. Fish production, also important for the country's economy, is a chief concern as well, as production in Mogadishu fell from seven tons-a-day in 1990 to an estimated 1.8 tons-a-day last year.

The largest single UNDP project currently underway is the "Somalia Rehabilitation Programme". Budgeted at $20 million, with $2 million cost-sharing from Italy, it operates in some 150 communities through grassroots groups, non-government organizations (NGOs) and traditional authorities to assist communities in defining for themselves their rehabilitation and development needs. Sub-projects carried out through this programme are typically in the sectors of health, education, water supply and agriculture and offer an important source of income and employment for such target groups as female heads-of-households and demobilized soldiers. UNDP is also assisting in the development of plans to demobilize and retrain Somali soldiers for local employment.

Apart from its normal programme activities, UNDP, in its coordination role, is helping manage emergency operations for the UN system in Somalia, and is providing vital logistical, security and communications support for UN agencies working there. A nine-person coordination team has recently been set up to handle these responsibilities on a daily basis, says Mr. Dessau, who now also carries the title of Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia. While UNDP's country programme for Somalia is still being managed out of Nairobi, it maintains four field offices within Somalia — in Mogadishu, Baidoa, Baroma and in Bosasso, where it recently re-opened its office after having closed it for security reasons. Earlier this year UNDP also returned to Kismayo and to the lower Juba region in southern Somalia, where it is concentrating its efforts on agricultural rehabilitation activities.

Although much of Somalia's infrastructure and landscape bear the visible markings of war and ruin, the country still possesses great economic potential due to its vast stretches of fertile land, considerable unused surface water resources, unexploited marine resources, a rich tradition of livestock production and untapped mineral deposits. These should work in Somalia's favor as it struggles to rebound from the twin blows of drought and civil war that led to the death of more than 300,000 Somalis from starvation and disease alone.

In all, it is estimated that Somalia's population within its national territory has been reduced by 35 per cent, from seven million to about 4.5 million, with some 400,000 Somalis becoming displaced internally and another 500,000-700,000 fleeing the country altogether. Compounding Somalia's recovery woes further is the fact that much of the country's road system has been damaged or destroyed, and that an estimated 80 per cent of Somalis have lost access to potable water.

New UNDP Book Reveals the True Impact of HIV and AIDS Worldwide

The personal insights and reflections of people affected by HIV and AIDS are contained in an introspective and compelling book that was released this

week by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Offering a fresh and realistic account of the impact of the epidemic globally, *HIV & AIDS: The Global Inter-Connection* contains a collection of 21 essays which illuminate the experiences of people responding to the HIV epidemic.

"These are voices of people not normally heard, of people who live with the epidemic in the developing world," says Elizabeth Reid, director of UNDP's HIV and Development Unit, who edited and compiled the book. "It is their reflections of how they see the epidemic and how they see their future," Ms. Reid says. "The aim is to allow their voices, their firsthand insights to come out, and to teach the rest of us the lessons they have learned."

The extent and effects of HIV and AIDS are revealed through the stories of people from around the world and from different walks of life. The illness is not limited to those on the margins of society. In today's inter-connected world, no locale or segment of society is free from the effects of HIV and AIDS.

Twenty-one chapters written from different perspectives by activists, government officials, health workers, journalists, educators, artists and others form a vivid image of the global and social causes and consequences of the epidemic. Their stories of living with and responding to HIV reveal the fundamental inter-connections of today's world and show how no one is free from its effects. The book reveals that it is not HIV and AIDS alone, but ignorance, silence and despair that are most responsible for its spread. In chapter after chapter, the human dimension of HIV and AIDS is portrayed. The epidemic comes to be seen not as a challenge faced soley by individuals, but rather as a challenge facing their communities, nations and the entire world.

Besides reducing fear and ignorance of this illness, *HIV & AIDS: The Global Inter-Connection*, published by Kumarian Press, puts it into a new perspective. From frank, empathetic and balanced tales of persons in familiar circumstances, the epidemic changes from an overwhelming, fearsome scourge to one which can be responded to by individuals, families, communities and nations through compassion, care and action.

HIV & AIDS: The Global Inter-Connection is compelling reading for anyone concerned about the future of the epidemic and how individuals and communities are living with — and working to stop — its spread. The book is being distributed by UNDP to its field office network, UN agencies and NGO partners. Other copies can be ordered from Kumarian Press (US$14.95), 630 Oakwood Avenue, Suite 119, West Hartford, CT., 06110-1529 USA. Phone (203) 953-0214; FAX (203) 953-8579; toll-free orders (800) 289-2664.

Gaza Clean-Up Project Brings Much-Needed Jobs While Improving Local Environment

The first large-scale UNDP project for the Palestinian people in Gaza, which began shortly after the Israeli withdrawal in 1994, has employed some 4,000 ex-detainees, refugees, and unemployed workers in the restoration of polluted and run-down areas and has also laid the groundwork for long-term infrastructure improvement of the area.

"The Gaza Clean-Up Project provides immediate employment and community improvements where they are desperately needed without costly and time-consuming studies," says Terje Larsen, special UN coordinator in Gaza. Ambassador Larsen, who mediated the secret talks which led to the Oslo Peace Accord between Israel and the PLO in September 1993, says "the peace process will succeed only if it improves the quality of life for Palestinians and fosters their independence. The project works because Palestinians manage the project, do the work, and receive the benefits."

The UNDP Clean-Up Project was devised both to address urgent infrastructure problems and to bring jobs to Gaza, where unemployment is now more than 50 per cent and the per capita income is only $800. Its local managers rotate the workers on a regular basis in order to give more Palestinians the opportunity to participate. The initiative is administered under UNDP's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (PAPP).

To date, nearly $7 million has been spent to fund community improvement activities. About half of that amount has been paid in wages to Palestinian workers, at the rate of $15 per worker a day. The balance has been spent on supplies and equipment for the clean-up activities. Since the project began Palestinians have:

- Painted 1.3 million square metres (5,000 city blocks) of walls, public buildings and guard rails;
- Laid five kilometres of curbstones and painted 60 kilometres (600 city blocks) of curbstones;
- Removed 200,000 cubic metres (6,000 truck loads) of trash;
- Cleaned five public parks and three cemeteries.

Gaza, one of the world's most densely populated areas, is home to about 900,000 people on just 140 square miles (365 sq. km). Luxembourg, in comparison, has less than half the population on almost 10 times as much land. The population includes 575,000 refugees — 300,000 of

whom live in squalid conditions in overcrowded refugee camps.

"The Palestinians need work, not surveys and studies telling them that they are poor," says James Gustave Speth, UNDP Administrator. "The project puts people to work right away and addresses the most dire needs of the poor."

Residents of Gaza are confronting a widespread deterioration in both physical infrastructure and municipal services. Every sector has been adversely affected, including housing, roads and streets, water supply, sewage systems, schools, health facilities and basic environmental services such as trash collection and disposal.

The project is funded by donations from Japan, Norway and the Holst Fund, which is under World Bank management. Donors have pledged additional funds that will be used to implement other related initiatives that are focused on more long-term improvements in Gaza, once the initial two-year clean-up phase has ended. These projects will seek to improve living conditions in Gaza by building new housing, developing adequate sewage and sanitation systems, renovating schools and improving roads.

New Director Named for UNDP's Division of Public Affairs

Mr. Djibril Diallo of Senegal has been named Director of UNDP's Division of Public Affairs effective 1 March. Mr. Diallo comes to UNDP from UNICEF, where he has served since 1986 in a number of capacities, including Senior Information Officer and Deputy Director, Division of Public Affairs. His most recent position at UNICEF was as Special Assistant to the Executive Director, where he helped to define programme objectives and action plans with the goal of mobilizing governments, institutions and people in support of the agency's activities. Mr. Diallo has also served previously at UNDP and UNHCR, and holds a Ph.D. in linguistics and communications from the University of London.

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